

RESEARCH REPORTS

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THE UNIVERSAL PRAYER GROUP

"Mpaebo Kuw"

(Adoagyiri, Nsawam)

THE CALL OF THE PROPHET

by K.A. Opoku *

Currently under study is the "Mpaebo Fekuw", or Universal Prayer Group, founded by the blind Odiyifo (prophet) Dompkeh in 1950. This is the second in our series of studies of Spiritual Churches. The first study, now completed, was on the Church of the Messiah in Madina.

The "Mpaebo Kuw", a name revealed to the prophet in his first vision, is not regarded by its members as a church. It is primarily, as the name suggests, a prayer group, in which prayers are offered for the many adherents in their various afflictions. The group is inter-denominational, and even Muslims are not excluded from membership.

Prospective members who have no church affiliation are advised to join existing churches and to attend the group's worship services on Fridays. The Mpaebo Kuw therefore serves as a "spiritual filling station" for members of other churches and other faiths who may seek membership or seek solutions for their specific problems.

The group now has five active branches: Nsawam, Aburi, Teshie, Tesano and Accra New Town. In addition to the above there are moribund branches at Mampong-Akuapem, Asuboi, Coaltar and Dokrokyewa, all in the Eastern Region.

Here follows an account of the call of the prophet recorded during an interview:

"I, Odiyifo Ebenezer Gyekye Dompkeh, the founder of the Universal Prayer Group, Adoagyiri, was born of staunch Presbyterian parents on Friday, 28th December, 1928 at Adoagyiri, Nsawam. My father, Mr. Thomas Asare Dompkeh, a farmer, is an Akim and a native of Adoagyiri, while my mother, the late Madam Susana Efua Adobea, a trader and a farmer, hailed from Akropong - Akwapim.

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"Though a weakling during my childhood, I managed to complete my elementary education at the Nsawam Presbyterian Mixed School in December 1947. I then worked for two years at the wholesale department of the United Africa Company at Akim Oda from 1948 to 1950.

"I began to have visions sometime in August, 1948. The first vision, which was preceded by a week-long of dreams, all of which came true, occurred on a Thursday night. I woke up to find my room illuminated although I had put out the light before going to bed. This greatly puzzled me, for I thought some thieves had broken into my room while I was asleep. On looking round to see if my few personal effects had been stolen, I beheld a strange spectacle in the eastern corner of my room. There the intensity of the illumination was much greater, and on the wall there was a crescent, encircled by a halo. Immediately below the crescent was a galaxy of seven stars, all twinkling. Below the galaxy was a small cross. I felt a cold shudder run through my spine and my eyes were suddenly filled with tears. Not knowing the meaning of the strange vision, I decided to force the door open and take to my heels. However, I felt spellbound and dumbfounded and fell prostrate in the middle of the room in my bid to escape. Lying in this position, and unconscious for some time, I heard a faint voice calling my name, "Ebenezer!" On raising my head in response to the call, I heard the voice ask: "Why do you want to escape? Do you want to shirk the responsibility I want to entrust into your hands? Did you not realise that your past dreams all came true, and why did you not broach the secret to the inmates of your house?" I tried to open my eyes to see the one speaking, but my eyes could not withstand the intensity of the illumination emanating from the eastern corner of the room. However in the blurred scene, I caught a glimpse of some winged creatures robed in white. Their features and bearing tallied with those given in prayer books for angels, and so I rightly concluded that they were holy angels of God. Then the angels commanded me to sing the hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty", and I did, still lying prostrate and shivering. After this, I was asked to sing a series of hymns, all to be found in the

Presbyterian Twi hymnal. The words of the first were:

"Yehowa ne me hwefo, na hwee renhia me!" (The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want). The next hymn was:

"Hwe yie a eye, ene fe a eye, se anuanom bom tra faako". (Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity). After singing all the verses of the above hymns I heard the angels also singing the following hymn:

"Momo mmoden na mo nye baako". (Persevere to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace). After all verses of the above hymn had been sung by the angels they enjoined me to admit both Muslims and Christians of all denominations into my prayer group and to work with them harmoniously. After this (command) I was asked to get up on my feet and when I did so I realized that the light in the room had decreased in intensity, and the room was then filled with a thick cloud of mist. I was next commanded to kneel upright and to raise both hands up in the air. On doing that I felt someone touch my hands, and suddenly I received a stinging sensation at the tips of my middle fingers, as if I were being injected. Thereupon my hands became numb and lost all sensation. After a few moments the voice said to me: "Henceforth your hands are blessed. Any patient you touch with your hands will be healed of his illness. A touch of your hands will induce fertility in sterile and impotent persons and will also effect easy birth for women in travail". I was also directed to bless water which would then become efficacious for healing all kinds of diseases. The angels also taught me how to bless olive oil and Florida water for healing purposes.

"This being over, the voices (the angels) ordered me to sing the hymn: "Yesu di yen kan na kyere yen kwan". (Jesus still lead on). And as I began to sing, the intensity of the illumination in the room increased greatly and I perceived seven burning candles before me. I therefore instinctively increased the tempo of the music and as the singing became more agitated I had an intense urge to go out and sing in praise of God. Although it was still pitch dark I boldly went to the outskirts of the town, Akim Oda, singing in praise of God. When

I returned home I was greatly relieved to find that the strange light had disappeared from my room, but as dawn approached the voices reappeared, asking me to go to Akim Awisa the next morning (Friday), where a prophetess would instruct me as to what to do.

"On the next morning I neither went to work nor to Awisa, for, I had then decided not to accept the vocation of a prophet. I arrived at this decision because I felt I was too wordly and pleasure-seeking to accept such a divine call. I felt I was lascivious and had an insatiable desire for alcohol and tobacco. As I stood at the back of my house pondering over the events of the night, I overheard a young man asking for me. When the young man drew near me, I introduced myself to him and took him to my house to listen to his mission. The young man revealed that he had been detailed in his dream to come to take me to Awisa to see a prophetess. Although I enquired about his name and place of residence the young man refused to disclose his identity. Uncertain as to what to do, I reluctantly agreed to accompany the young man to Awisa to see the prophetess. When we arrived at Awisa I asked for the location of the prophetess' residence but my guide simply told me to follow him. When we approached the entrance to the house, the guide pointed to the house and asked me to enter, adding that he himself would soon follow. As I entered the courtyard, I heard the singing of very moving hymns in the room of the prophetess. I raised my head and saw a woman dressed in a white flowing gown with her head also turbaned in white. There and then I became petrified and could neither take a step nor open my mouth. As I stood fast there I heard the woman give glory to God saying: "I thank thee God for having given me your messenger!" Then she rushed and sprinkled some Florida water on me and covered me with a piece of calico. At this point I broke into singing and felt, as I did so, that my eyes were getting out of focus. With tears welling down my cheeks I sang several hymns from the Presbyterian Twi Hymn book. After I had finished singing, the prophetess pushed some tender leaves of the snow white plant into my hand, and suddenly I lost all consciousness. Finally I came to myself and was told that I had offered prayers for many people

while I was in a trance. The woman informed me that God had chosen me as a missionary to do His work and that I should embrace the new vocation whole-heartedly.

" After I had related the past dreams and the previous night's vision to the prophetess, she asked if I could identify the guide who had brought me to Awisa, and I answered in the affirmative; then the prophetess brought me food but I could not eat it, for I had lost all appetite. The prophetess then prayed for me, gave me some money for my return trip to Oda, and led me to the outskirts of the town to wait for a lorry.

" About five days later, I received a message from the prophetess, Madam Sophia Abram, asking me to proceed immediately to Awisa and I went there the next day in response to the call. The prophetess told me that it had been revealed to her in a vision that I should observe a forty-day fast, and I willingly complied. For the first seven days I observed an absolutely dry fast (that is I totally abstained from food and even ordinary water). During this fast I had many visions about the work I was to do.* After the fast, the prophetess advised me to accept my new vocation without reservations. The voices also kept urging me to take up the challenge but I still entertained some fears and planned to run away to Adoagyiri, my home town. I then began playing hide and seek with Prophetess Abram, and refused to honour any of her invitations to attend worship services at Awisa. Whenever I heard that the prophetess had come to Oda I would hide in a friend's house all day long. Not only did I refuse to honour the woman's invitation but I also refused to offer prayers for those who flocked to my house for intercession. I would often ask a suppliant to wait for me in my room and then I would run away to town. I could detect those possessed by evil spirits after my fast and could also exorcise evil spirits from those possessed. Worried about reports that I was not living up to her expectations, the prophetess summoned me one day to

* The Prophet refused to disclose these visions on the grounds that they were secrets, and had to remain so.

Awisa. There she warned me that if I played with the work, the Devil would one day have power to tempt me. After this maternal piece of advice, she forbade me to drink alcohol.

" When I returned to Akim Oda, I naively thought that the strange voices could be silenced and driven away by the scent of alcohol; and desirous of remaining worldly, I took to heavy drinking. I organized week-end trips with friends to Kade, Akwatia, and Asamankese, for the sole purpose of drinking. But the more I drank the more frequently did I hear the strange voices. The visions also became more vivid the day I drank heavily. The prophetess herself paid me a visit to warn me to break my drinking habit but her efforts were to no avail. I maintained that I could not become a teetotaler overnight and that if God himself wanted me to stop drinking He would have adopted a mysterious means to rid me of the habit.

" On one of my routine week-end drinking trips to Akwatia, I was brought back home nearly unconscious. I regained consciousness to find myself lying in a pool of water, which had been intentionally poured over me. Then raising my head and looking at the eastern corner of the room where the visions mostly appeared, I solemnly prayed thus: 'O God, forgive me the disobedience, henceforth help me to abstain from drink, let it smell badly to me.' Ever since that incident, I have tasted no drink, be it alcohol or mineral. I have also never smoked since that day.

" The next day I paid a surprise visit to Prophetess Abram at Awisa to tell her what had happened the previous night and also of my resolution to stop drinking and smoking. This amazed and delighted the prophetess and she gave thanks to God for having listened to her earnest prayers.

" Some time after this visit to the prophetess I began to have a change of mind. I felt I was not the rightful person for that kind of job. I felt the job entailed great difficulties, personal sacrifices and

fastings. It was during this time that I received my second punishment. One night in 1950, as I lay awake in bed I felt that a mote had fallen on my brow and as I stretched my hand to remove it, the particle slipped into my eye. There and then I became blind and have remained so ever since. For the first two months I could see nothing, but after that time there was some improvement with my sight. I can now see a new moon and can also distinguish between night and day. A reflection on this incident always brings to my mind the Scriptures about Saul's vision and his subsequent conversion. It also reminds me of God's omnipotence.

" It was after I had become blind that I decided that I should abandon all hopes of reverting to my old habits and to start my new work in earnest. During all this time, from when I first had my vision up to the day I became blind in 1950, I remained an employee of the Akim Oda branch of the United Africa Company. I came to Adoagyiri in that same year, 1950, and founded my Universal Prayer Group. I married Grace Dompseh, daughter of Prophetess Florence Mary Oparebea, in 1956, and we are now blessed with four children."



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